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About Andreas Öjerfors

Game design

Age of Conan: Rise of the Godslayer

Age of Conan: Hyborian Adventures

Editor-in-chief

PC Gaming World (Scandinavia)

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The Untapped Potential of the MMO

Or ”Why Han Solo Returned to Finish the Fight”

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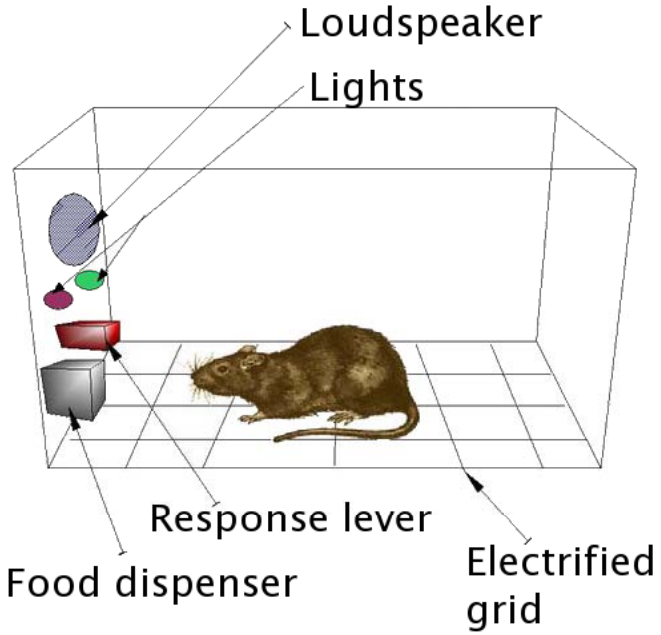
Evolution of MMO narrative

Rattus norvegicus

The ”Skinner box”



Evolution of MMO narrative

The ”Skinner box”

Evolution of MMO narrative

The ”player’s story” period

- First generation: Ultima Online *(dynamic world)*

Ultima Online

Evolution of MMO narrative

The ”player’s story” period

- First generation: Ultima Online
  (dynamic world)
- Asheron’s Call & Everquest
  (lack of direction)

222/222
328/328
181/316
AutoRun OFF
N
E
W
S
42.4N
34.0E
Spellbook
Components
Frost Arc II
Frost Streak II
Schools:
Creature
Item
Life
War
Levels:
I
II
III
IV
V
VI
VII
Delete
22:56:49 Beginning delayed player killer logoff...
22:56:50 Kuna says, "Malar Aeril"
22:56:50 You have left an allegiance chat room.
22:56:51 You have entered your allegiance chat room.
22:56:53 [Allegiance] Blood's Rain says, "thats where my house is"
Chat
Send
Asheron's Call

The ”player’s story” period

- Second generation: Dark Age of Camelot
(Realm vs Realm)

Dark Age of Camelot
Scheußlichkeit
Juri Maximus
<Templerorden>
Mithandir
<Arawns dunkle Garde>
Hadrians Wall
<Die Gefährten>
Renya Sluage
<Vae Victis>
Esodiel
<Drachenorden>
Glorry
<Kleine Strolche>
Wolfhound
<Vae Victis>
Helping Hand
<Vae Victis>
Swordy Ontour
Mugandait
<Last Men Standing>
Anur Divan
<Eternal Fury>
Hafensaenger
<Pendragon's Erben>
Ahragon Elessar
<Die Gefährten>
Dalon
<Kreuzzug der Adler>
Spezi
<Stormraiders>
Belarus
<Arawns dunkle Garde>
Ariman
Lia
Laria
Agar
Harold Der Fischer
<Arawns dunkle Die Gefährten>
Knuckle Schuttle
<Renaissance>
Halbmond
<Wächter des Grals>
Rubber Duck
Posh
Dool Holybow
W
NW

Evolution of MMO narrative

The ”player’s story” period

- Second generation: Dark Age of Camelot *(Realm vs Realm)*
- EVE Online & Star Wars: Galaxies *(player-driven dynamics)*

EVE Online
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The ”designer’s story” period

Third generation: World of Warcraft & Everquest II

(quest-driven content)

World of Warcraft

The Lone Hero

The protagonist comes to a world
that cannot change through
his hands alone.

The Lone Hero

Luke Skywalker: *I got a mission to attack the Death Star. That is so cool! I need to buy an X-Wing.*
Luk3 Skyw4lk3r: *What are you talking about? I destroyed it last month. Haven't you noticed? WE'RE FREE! HOORAY!*
Luke Skywalker: *You are confused. Perhaps you should speak with master Yoda.*
Luk3 Skyw4lk3r: *Yoda's dead, man. Yoda's dead.*
Luke Skywalker: *That's it! I'm logging off!*

Singleplayer traditions in an MMO environment

The Lone Hero (current strategies)

- Give the illusion of change
- Only provide mundane tasks
  - Instance / Phasing

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The Lone Hero

Allow communities to tell stories.

Complex scenarios

Massively chaotic environments.

The never-ending game

Shortage of content and
bloated productions.

Content through systems

Quality requirements

- Challenge
- Consistency
- Repeatability

Direct Conflict – PvP

GDC Europe
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Direct Conflict – PvP

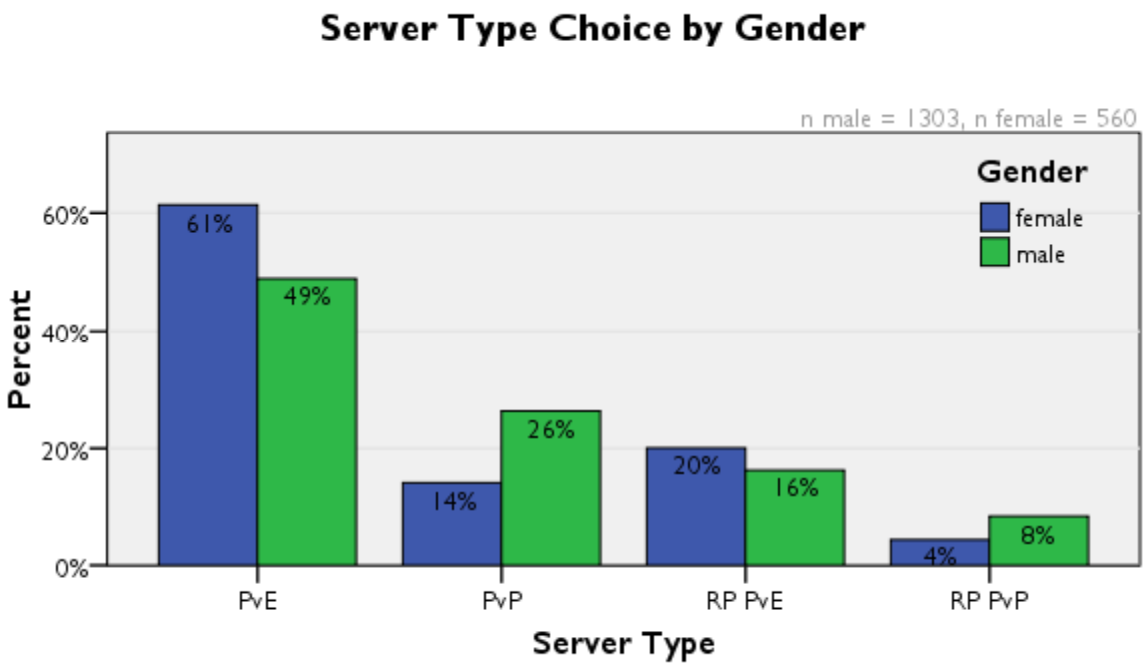
Player-driven dynamics through humans in opposition.

Content through systems

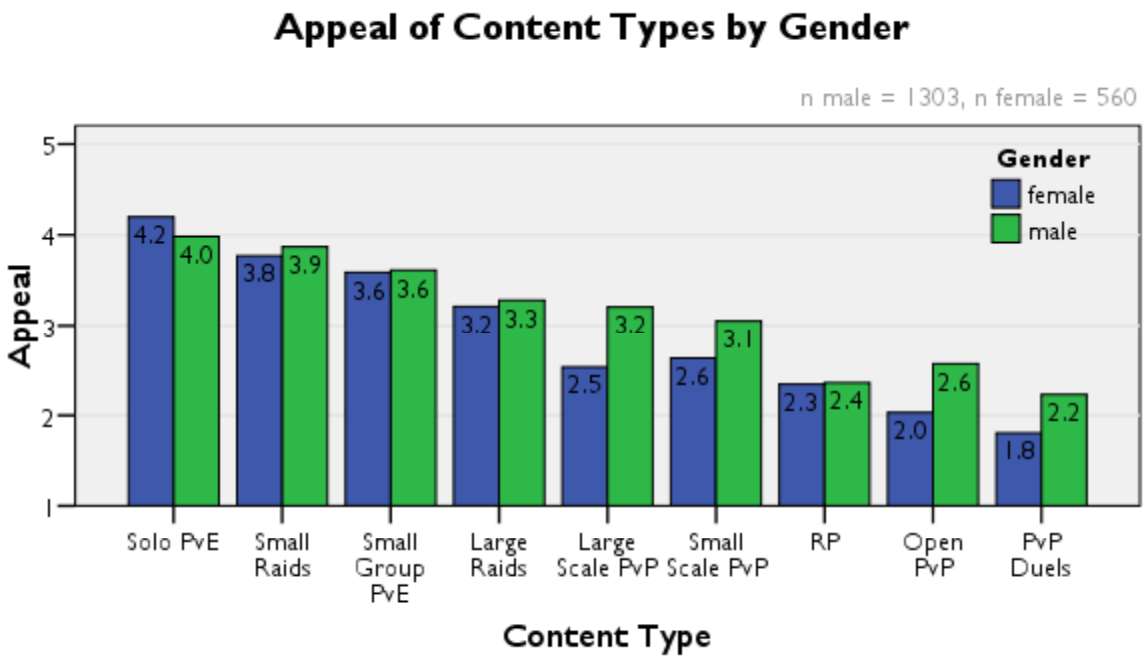
Faction PvP

- Higher stakes
- Greater than themselves
- Strenghtens communities
- Doesn’t rely on ”lone hero”

Beyond PvP


Server Type Choice by Gender
n male = 1303, n female = 560
Gender
female
male
Percent
60%
40%
20%
0%
61%
49%
14%
26%
20%
16%
4%
8%
PvE
PvP
RP PvE
RP PvP
Server Type

Beyond PvP



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PvP support roles

Out-of-combat systems.

System outline

- Generate player dynamics
- Fulfill quality requirements
- Utilize main gameplay system
  - Use opposing factions

Player conflict through proxy

Meaningful faction based player conflict expressed indirectly through a PvE proxy.

Player conflict through proxy

Player conflict through proxy

Player conflict through proxy

Proxy moving target between 2 states.

Content through systems

The persistant world and the fear of change

Always isolate risk in dynamic systems.

Conclusion

The massive game is at odds with static content, but carries an untapped potential for dynamic worlds that can empower player communities to craft their own, epic tales.

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